



Grange Drive

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College

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Newsletter Summer 1 2026

Welcome to the Summer 1 newsletter for Birch Wood School, Grange Drive. As you will see, it has been a wonderfully busy and vibrant half term, full of enriching experiences, joyful celebrations and inspiring moments for our pupils.

From the energy and excitement of PMLD Awareness Day, when our school glowed with colour, music and sensory experiences, to the thoughtful recognition of Undiagnosed Children's Day, our community has continued to embody the values of inclusion, compassion and the celebration of every individual.

Our pupils also enjoyed a wide range of memorable trips and outdoor opportunities. They took part in farm visits, Forest School sessions, sporting events and adventurous activities, with each experience helping to build confidence, curiosity and connections beyond the classroom. These opportunities are at the heart of what makes Birch Wood such a special place to learn and grow.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated staff team and supportive families, whose commitment ensures that every child is given the opportunity to thrive and succeed. Most importantly, I am incredibly proud of our pupils, who continue to approach each day with enthusiasm, resilience and joy. I hope you enjoy reading about all that has been achieved this half term and celebrating the many successes of our wonderful school community.

Amy Dunstan, Head of School

Trip to Battram Woods

Students from Wrens, Robins, Kingfishers and Chiffchaffs spent a wonderful day at Battram Woods taking part in exciting Forest School activities. They developed their knowledge of trees and wildlife while using their creativity to build beautiful art sculptures and pictures using natural materials.





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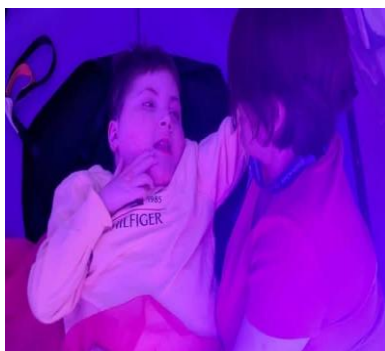
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Undiagnosed Children's Day

Undiagnosed Children's Day was a time to recognise and support families of children with undiagnosed genetic conditions. It can be an isolating experience, and this is where SWAN UK (Syndromes Without A Name) plays a vital role by connecting families and offering support as they navigate the unknown. Pupils and staff from Merlins and Kites took part in pink-themed, multi-sensory exploration activities, celebrating our SWAN friends through sensory experiences, connection and joy. Pink is worn worldwide on this day to symbolise awareness, acceptance and belonging, values that sit at the heart of everything we do in Merlins and Kites.

It was a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of SWAN UK and the important work they do, while celebrating the strength and uniqueness of every child in our community.



PMLD Awareness Day

Our pupils had an incredible time celebrating PMLD Awareness Day. The school came alive with colour, light and music as everyone dressed in their brightest neon and light-up clothing for a day full of joy and celebration.

The day was packed with immersive, multi-sensory experiences, including a Tac-Pac-inspired session led by our wonderful music therapist, Neil, and a Big 'Glow-Up' themed party that transformed our corridors into a vibrant dance floor. Thank you to everyone who took part - you helped make PMLD Awareness Day a truly memorable celebration.





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Chiffchaffs trip to the farm

Chiffchaffs enjoyed an exciting trip to Little Jacks Farm as part of their curriculum. They had the opportunity to see the chickens, goats, sheep, ponies and donkeys up close.



Peacocks trips to Fernleys

Peacocks have been making weekly community visits to Fernleys this half term. As well as enjoying the delicious ice creams on offer, they have been learning how to make choices, handle money and experience a new environment with their friends.





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Treehouse KS2 athletics competition

Students from The Nest and The Burrow represented Birch Wood at the KS2 athletics competition held at Saffron Lane. They showed tremendous perseverance and teamwork as they competed in a range of athletic events alongside other schools.



Falcons trip to Brooksby College Farm

Falcons enjoyed an exciting trip to Brooksby College Farm. They got to see lambs that had recently been born, cows and calves enjoying their lunch, and a whole range of other animals including piglets, goats, donkeys and alpacas. Falcons loved learning about the animals' life cycles and their environment.





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Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre

Over the last term, students from a variety of classes have been visiting Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre. They have shown courage, resilience, perseverance and amazing enthusiasm while trying a range of activities. These have included climbing and abseiling, sailing on a bell boat and whizzing down the zip wire.



Merlin's Sunbeam Barge trip

Merlins enjoyed a fantastic pirate adventure on the water with Sunbeam Barges, travelling from Leicester to Birstall. Everyone enjoyed the cruise, listening to shanty songs, singing and waving boomwhackers to the music, as well as taking turns to feel the wind on their faces up on deck.





Falcons Athletic trip

Falcons visited Saffron Lane Athletics Ground for the day. All pupils participated enthusiastically in a range of activities, including running, long jump and howler throwing.



Forest school at Birch Wood

Students at Grange Drive have taken part in a range of activities in our own Forest School grounds. This has included making toast, toasting pancakes and marshmallows, and exploring different fruits and vegetables. They have also been caring for the herbs and strawberry plants that have been growing, as well as learning how to use a range of tools.





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Dolce school meals

We hope your child has been enjoying the meals provided by our new catering provider, Dolce. Parents and carers are now able to pre-order specific meals via SchoolGrid, which allows you to select a meal of your child's choice. If you have any difficulty using this system or need support, SchoolGrid can be contacted on 01506 300310 or by email at support@schoolgrid.co.uk.

Exemplary Leadership Programme (ELP)

What is the ELP?

Research shows that a strong behaviour culture, combined with a well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum and excellent teaching, transforms pupils' outcomes and life chances.

The ELP, developed by The Knowledge Hub with expert school leaders and educationalists, is designed to help leaders drive whole-school improvement. It focuses on three key areas:

- Building and sustaining an exemplary behaviour culture
- Developing a knowledge-rich curriculum with subject leaders
- Delivering the curriculum effectively, grounded in evidence and subject expertise

The programme is led by experienced tutors from a range of school contexts, including inner-city, rural and coastal settings, across primary and secondary phases.

What does Birch Wood do?

Through our work in curriculum development and high-quality teaching and learning, we are proud to be a host school. In this role, we welcome senior leaders from across the country and give them the opportunity to see first-hand the exceptional work of our staff and pupils in everyday practice. This term's visit focuses on curriculum enactment, exploring how our ambitious curriculum is brought to life through effective teaching and learning in the classroom.





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Attendance

In August 2024, the government introduced statutory guidance “**Working Together to Improve School Attendance**” and to comply with this, Birch Wood School’s Attendance Policy was updated. It can be found on the school website.

Above
95%

85% -
95%

Below
85%

Excellent! Well done!
This will help all aspects
of their progress and
life in school.

Average! Well done!
Try to build on this.

Cause for Concern
It **IS** affecting attainment
and progress and is
disrupting students learning.

At Birch Wood School, we fully understand that some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance, including long-term physical or mental health needs. We will always take a support-first approach to improving attendance, with a focus on supportive measures. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis, reviewed regularly, and supported through joined-up pastoral care where needed.

The school’s Senior Attendance Champion is **Kate Draycott**

Absence from school:

If your child is going to be absent from school, a parent or carer must notify the school with the reason for absence by 7.30am, or as soon as reasonably possible, by calling the school office on 01664 483340 or by emailing pupilabsence@birchwoodschoo.co.uk

Key dates

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Monday 25th – Friday 29th May | HALF TERM |
| 17th- 19th June | D of E qualifying Expedition |
| Thursday 18th June | BWV New starters Parent Meeting |
| Tuesday 30th June | Grange Drive Sports Day |
| Thursday 2nd July | Moving Up Day for BWV/AH/BWC |
| Friday 3rd July | BWV/AH Sports Day |
| Wednesday 8th July | KS4 & POST 16 Prom |
| Thursday 9th July | School closes |
| Friday 10th July – Friday 21st August | SUMMER HOLIDAYS |



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Academic Year 2026-2027

Autumn Term

School Opens to students: Monday 24th August 2026

August Bank Holiday: Monday 31st August 2026

Mid Term Break: Monday 19th October to Friday 23rd October 2026

School Closes: Friday 18th December 2026

Number of school days 78 days

Spring Term

School Opens to students: Tuesday 5th January 2027

Mid Term Break: Monday 15th February to Friday 19th February 2027

School Closes: Friday 19th March 2027

Number of school days 49 days

Summer Term

School Opens to students: Monday 5th April 2027

May Day Bank Holiday: Monday 3rd May 2027

Mid Term Break: Monday 31st May to Friday 4th June 2027

School Closes: Thursday 8th July 2027

Number of school days 63 days

Total school days 190 days

5 Staff training days: Wednesday 19th August 2026

Thursday 20th August 2026

Friday 21st August 2026

Monday 26th October 2026

Monday 4th January 2027